

Changes in patterns of migration

Throughout history, migrants have travelled from place to place, looking for a better life, driven by forces like poverty, industrialisation, imperialism and religious persecution.

We're going to explore how immigrants have changed Britain over the centuries, and how British migrants have changed life elsewhere.

Unfortunately, immigrants have often faced hostility in Britain.

Emigration from Britain has also been happening for centuries. Many Puritans, who followed the Protestant faith, headed for America. There they showed no mercy, brutally murdering Native Americans and ransacking communities.

Later, Britain's Charles II developed a strong dislike for Quakers and Baptists, who also soon fled to the Land of Liberty.

The Quakers tried to live peacefully with natives and set an example to their fellow British expats.

By the 17th and 18th centuries, there were mass global shifts in populations, as the world entered an age of empire building and colonisation.

When the disastrous potato famine struck Ireland in 1845, hundreds of thousands of Irish refugees headed for America, England and Australia, where their cultural legacy remains today.

Later during Victoria's reign, when the British Empire was at its height, many Brits relocated to the colonies expecting to find work. Or forged into new territories elsewhere, like the Welsh colony in Patagonia.

Meanwhile, things were stirring in Britain itself, as the industrial revolution caused mass internal migration, as the rural population rushed to the cities for jobs.

Many English workers also flooded into Wales for coal mining jobs, bringing the English language with them. And as many Welsh people left for jobs in English cities, usage of the Welsh language dropped.

And so to the early 20th century, where British hostility to immigrants was still rife.

Eastern European and Russian Jews faced particular hatred, with racial abuse and violence on the streets until the end of the 1930s. Initially the

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British government reluctantly opened its doors to Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, but once World War Two started and Hitler's persecution became apparent, attitudes changed and the government became much more welcoming.

In the decades since the war, immigrants' cultural, intellectual and economic contributions have become increasingly valued.

West Indian migrants brought ska and reggae, Punjabis brought Bhangra, and Chinese and Indian food took Britain by storm.

In the 21st century, racial tensions and political opposition to immigration are still big societal problems.

52 per cent of Brits voted to leave the European Union in 2016, many of them citing immigration as their biggest concern.

But immigration is nothing new. As we've seen, populations have been blending and enriching each other over many centuries, helping to build the multicultural society we know today.